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ANALOGY

OF

SACRED HISTORY AND PROPHECY,

WITH THE

EVENTS AND PRINCIPLES

OF

MODERN TIMES:

EXEMPLIFIED IN A REMARKABLE PASSAGE OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH:

A DISCOURSE,

WRITTEN IN IRELAND DURING THE LATE REBELLION THERE, 1798.

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THE Author of this Discourse has ventured to give a construction of the following noble passage of the prophet Isaiah, very different from what he has met with in the commentators on that prophet. To this deviation from authorities which he respects so highly, he was led, or rather irresistibly impelled, by reflecting on the prevailing principles and course of events of modern times, compared with those to which the words of the prophet were more immediately applied. Had these events occurred, and these principles been so clearly developed, in the days of those great commentators, and particularly of that truly great and good man, Bishop Lowth, he presumes to believe that this construction would not have been left to him to suggest.

ANALOGY, &c.

ISAIAH, ch. viii. ver. 6, 7, 8.

" *Forsomuch as this people refuseth the*
" *waters of Shiloah, that go softly, and*
" *rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;*
" *Now, therefore, behold, the Lord bring-*
" *eth up upon them the waters of the*
" *river, strong and many, even the King*
" *of Assyria, and all his glory, and he*
" *shall come up over all his channels, and*
" *go over all his banks, and he shall*
" *pass through Judah; he shall overflow*
" *and go over: he shall reach even to the*
" *neck, and the stretching out of his*
" *wings shall fill the breadth of thy land,*
" *O Immanuel!*"

HISTORY in general has been called *Philosophy* taught by example: with still greater propriety may Sacred History be

considered as *Religion* taught by example.

In this point of view, the records of nations, or of individual characters, are regarded as collections of experiments on human nature, from the results of which we learn to estimate the practical influence of various motives on the minds and dispositions of men. We are taught to trace the various consequences, immediate and remote, which naturally follow from dispositions and characters thus formed, and exhibiting their effects in active life; and lastly, we are enabled, thus, to deduce those important events which have proved decisive of the fate of particular men, or societies, from their ultimate sources in the moral nature of man.

Minds well stored with this valuable information, will necessarily desire to derive practical benefit from it; for which

purpose, finding, by the experience of past ages, that similar motives have generally produced similar effects, they are led to conclude that man's nature has been, in all ages and countries, substantially the same; and to infer from hence, that well attested historical events form the best foundation for directing our judgment as to the various tendencies of motives, dispositions, and actions, at present existing, and under our immediate observation; as well as the surest guide for conjecture as to the probable results which are yet to be developed by time.

To this noble and worthy exercise of the intellectual faculties, Sacred History furnishes such uncommonly precious materials, as it were vain to expect can be equalled by all the other annals of mankind. For, in the first place, considering it as mere history, it gives us an uncommonly well written account of a people

in every state in which society has been found to exist, from the simple to the cultivated; from a single migrating family of shepherds, to a populous, agricultural, and commercial society, passing through almost every form of government, and through every vicissitude of human affairs. Its rise and its decline both excellently described,—the true efficient causes of both accurately developed, and the manners and character of the people, at various periods, given in a manner peculiarly descriptive. These circumstances alone, I say, must render it highly interesting, considered in no other light than as a relation of curious facts, relative to a portion of our species; but, regarded in its natural and prominent light, as the moral and religious history of a society of fellow mortals, the particular object of which seems to be, to exhibit clearly the manner in which human actions, and their consequences,

flow from dispositions, and to lay open to our view the decisions of the Almighty Ruler of the universe on these actions and dispositions; and still further, when we comprehend also the prophetical writings, to give us such an insight into the manner in which those events, which involve the happiness or misery of man, are consequent on his religious and moral conduct, by the immediate direction of Divine Providence; considered, I say, in this light, the value of these sacred records must, to every thinking mind, be deemed inestimable.

But further, we are told expressly by St. Paul, that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for *our* learning, upon whom *the ends of the world are come;* from which, as well as from the example of his reasoning on several passages of Sacred History, we are warranted in concluding that the various

decisions of the Almighty on instances of conduct and character exhibited by the Jews, as well as the consequent judgments denounced against them, if they were not intended as *miniature representations* of what might afterwards occur, and be *further fulfilled on a great scale in the Christian dispensation*, were certainly recorded by the sacred historians and prophets, and have been transmitted to us, as *warnings of similar judgments on similar offences*, and that we Christians, who enjoy in our religion the ultimate object of the whole Jewish dispensation, should apply their example to ourselves in the many striking cases where a parallel occurs.

One of these cases, contained in the words of the prophet Isaiah, which I have just now read, I shall endeavour to lay before you, as an instance of the kind of application which may be made of passages of these writings to our own

circumstances, and of the valuable instruction which may be derived from that source.

Historical writers have observed a strong resemblance between the natural body of man, and the political body of nations, in the gradual advance of both from a state of infancy to a certain point of maturity, suitable to their several constitutions and capacities, and in the subsequent progress, more or less rapid, in the same proportion, to decay and dissolution. When the history of a nation affords an exemplification of this whole passage, from birth to maturity, and from thence to decay, it is evident that the most interesting period of this passage to other nations, who have already attained to a high degree of civilization, is just that which constitutes the very point of change from the one to the other state, and so much of the antecedent and subsequent periods, as may serve to give a

clear view of the efficient causes, as well as of the manner of operation of this important change. Applying this observation to the history of the Jews, it cannot fail to strike us as remarkable, that this is precisely the point, in their records, which is the most illustrated; not merely, as in other nations, by historians, but by an extraordinary concurrence of the greatest prophets, who then, for the first time, regularly committed their prophecies to writing, which, by that means, have come down to our hands. Of these, Isaiah, who, on many accounts, deservedly holds the first rank, filled the prophetical office upwards of 60 years, in the reigns of four kings of Judah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Under the two first of these kings, Uzziah and Jotham, the kingdom of Judah had attained to the summit of its prosperity, after the separation of the ten tribes: under the two last it declined rapidly.

Uzziah, during a long and uniformly prosperous reign, not only preserved the internal tranquillity of his kingdom, as well as defended it from external attacks, by maintaining a great army, but extended it considerably by conquest, and enriched it beyond former example, by recovering the port of Elath, and the commerce of the East, and of India, from the Edomites, and by applying himself to the promotion of agriculture.

All these improvements were preserved, and carried to a still greater height by his son and successor, Jotham, so that, as the prophet himself strongly expresses it,— "*their land was full of silver and gold,* "*neither was there any end of their trea-* "*sures: their land also was full of horses,* "*neither was there any end of their cha-* "*riots.*" In this state Ahaz succeeded to the kingdom, in whose reign, of only sixteen years, we find that fatal change

commence, which finally terminated in utter destruction, and captivity under the Assyrian power. For that debauched prince, instead of supporting the principles of pure religion and morals, the only effectual means of controlling that corruption and tendency to dissolution, which naturally arises, in an extensive society, from prosperity and affluence, was himself the first to set the example of casting off these salutary restraints, and rushing headlong into irreligion and debauchery.

In this defection from the laws of God, he was so generally followed by the nation at large, that even then the foundation was laid of their severe punishment, by the Babylonish captivity, both in the decrees of Providence, and in the chain of natural events, although it was not fully accomplished, till many years after. This will appear from an attentive consideration of the words of the prophet,

repeated in the text, in which the nature both of the crimes and punishment of this people is accurately described, in words of the most significant import.

The quality of the criminal conduct, which drew on the Jews the determination of heavy chastisement from the Almighty, is expressed in these figurative terms, appropriated to the stile and language of prophecy. "Forsomuch as this people "refuseth the waters of Shiloah, that go "softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Rema-"liah's son." Here we have evidently announced two distinct heads of criminality, the one expressed by the terms, "refusing the waters of Shiloah that go "softly," and the other by "rejoicing in "Rezin and Remaliah's son," to perceive the import of which it will be necessary to examine the prophetical meaning and proper application of the peculiar terms here made use of.

The figures used in prophecy are generally taken either from the well known qualities of objects, natural or artificial, animate or inanimate, or from certain known and determinate qualities, or characters of persons or societies. In the first case it is to be observed, that as natural objects are capable of producing more than one effect, they may be alluded to under more than one sense. The element of water, for instance, may either serve as one of the great supports of animal and vegetable life, or it may become an instrument of destruction to both. In the first sense, as water contributes to the refreshment and support of the body, in like manner the inspired writers consider the pure precepts of religion, as administering comfort, and restoring vigour to the debilitated mind. Thus Isaiah, predicting the diffusion of religious knowledge to all classes of mankind, under the gospel, proclaims,—" to every one that thirsteth,

" come ye to the waters, and he that hath " no money;" and again, to the same purpose, he says,—" I will pour water upon " him that is thirsty, and floods upon the " dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon " thy seed, and my blessing upon thine " offspring;" and still more expressly the prophet Jeremiah, in a passage strikingly parallel with that of Isaiah, which we are now considering, says, " *my people* " *have committed two evils; they have for-* " *saken me, the fountain of living waters,* " *and hewed them out cisterns, broken cis-* " *terns, that can hold no water.*" In the same sense our Lord himself says to the woman of Samaria, " whosoever drinketh " of the water that I shall give him, shall " never thirst, but it shall be in him a " well of water, springing up into ever- " lasting life."

But this expression of the waters of Shiloah contains not only an allusion to

the general beneficent qualities of the element of water, but a particular allusion to the stream of Shiloah, which requires further explanation.

This was a brook of pure water, which flowed round the hill of Sion, and was conducted into cisterns within the city of Jerusalem, where it served for drink, and all domestic uses to the people. One of these cisterns, which was called, from the brook that supplied it, the pool of *Siloam*, is particularly mentioned by St. John, as the water with which Christ directed *the blind man to wash his eyes*, and which was thus made the immediate instrument of restoring him to sight; now it is remarkable that, on this occasion, the Evangelist particularly informs us, that the Hebrew name, or word, *Siloam* signifies "*sent.*" Applying this interpretation of the Evangelist, which thus rests on an authority above all doubt, to the same word, and

the same object used by Isaiah, in a figurative sense, we shall find that it will immediately throw a new and very striking light on the whole passage of the prophet, and bring forward to our view an extent and importance of meaning that might otherwise escape observation.

If by *the waters of Shiloah* we understand, according to this application, the precepts and doctrines of those who are *sent*, of those who have been *commissioned by the Almighty to declare his will to man*, then this whole phrase will imply *the doctrines of revealed religion*, and the criminality here imputed to the Jews by the prophet, will be their slighting and refusing to submit to the influence of the laws and precepts of revelation; and further, if we allow the prophet's words to have a more remote application to the Christian dispensation, then we may suppose, that by the *waters of Shiloah* may be

intimated *to us also* the *pure precepts of the gospel of Christ*, the precepts of the SHILOAH, of him who it was predicted by the patriarch Jacob, should come as the *sent* or *commissioned* of God, in a peculiar and eminent manner, to instruct mankind fully and finally in his will.

The singularly appropriate and characteristical quality assigned by the prophet *to the waters of Shiloah*, coincides so perfectly with the true nature of the divine doctrines of revealed religion, both Jewish and Christian, as well as with the general scope of the passage, as scarcely to leave a possibility of doubt upon the meaning. He calls them "*the waters that go* SOFTLY;" What expression, what figure, could more elegantly, or more justly, represent to us the pure, the gentle, and, at the same time, superiorly beneficent spirit of those religious and moral sentiments which have been communicated to man *by the teachers*

SENT *of God*, than this image of a dear rivulet of sweet and wholesome water, fresh from the source, not swelling into an impetuous, turbid, and destructive torrent, but ever gently flowing, and ministering refreshment and comfort to all mankind!

But these are sentiments and dispositions which our own experience might teach us, if that of the Jews, and the authority of the prophet were wanting, suit not with the pride and various passions of the human heart, to which the very *modesty*, no less than the *purity*, of such sentiments is wholly adverse and revolting. The mind, immersed in worldly pursuits, or resigned to indulgence and selfishness, acquires by degrees a hardness, a confidence in itself, *a contempt of dependence, even on its Creator*, that inclines it to spurn with disdain the *humility* of true religion, and to prefer those qualities *which swell its vanity*, or

flatter its gratification, to the *modest suggestions* of the holy spirit. Such was the case of the Jews, whose opulence enabled them to "*add house to house, and field to* "*field, till there was no place, that they* "*might be placed alone in the midst of the* "*earth.*" Yet instead of looking up with gratitude to the true source of this prosperity, instead of imploring the continuance of it from their great benefactor, the vanity and depravity of their hearts disposed them to adopt in preference, and to imitate with delight, those debauched manners, those impetuous passions, and those irreligious principles, of their neighbouring and inveterate enemies, which were exerted no less to their external injury than to their internal corruption:— "*they rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's* "*son.*" With regard to these, we are told by the prophet in the chapter immediately preceding, "that Rezin, King of Syria, "and Pekah the son of Remaliah, King

" of Israel, went up towards Jerusalem, to " war against it: and when it was told the " house of David that Syria was confe- " derate with Ephraim, his heart was " moved, and the heart of his people, as " the trees of the wood are moved with " the wind." It appears that the object of these confederate powers was not only to plunder and destroy the people of Judah, but to overturn the government itself, to abolish the kingly race of David, and to set up an usurper on the throne; but, on this occasion, the general alarm of the king and his people having, probably for a time, brought them to a sense of religion, it pleased Divine Providence to save them from the threatened destruction. The removal of this danger, however, had little or no effect in recalling either Ahaz or his subjects to a sense of their duty, or a sincere and permanent reformation of their lives; in consequence of which they were, in a subsequent invasion, by the

same powers, " delivered into the hand " of the King of Syria, who smote them, " and carried away a great multitude of " captives to Damascus:—they were also " delivered into the hand of Pekah, King " of Israel, who slew in Judah 120,000 " in one day, and carried away cap- " tive of their brethren 200,000 women " and children, and took much spoil to " Samaria."

I have extracted these instances of the determined and inveterate hostility of Syria and Israel, against Judah, at this period, rather as specimens of those dispositions which that corrupted people preferred to *the waters of Shiloah, that go softly*, to which they are so justly placed in opposition by the prophet, and to illustrate his meaning in the words under our consideration, than as historical facts. And here it deserves *our particular* attention, that though in hostile animosity

these two confederate nations seem to have agreed, yet in relentless cruelty Syria seems to have been far exceeded by Israel. The Syrians were, in fact, principally actuated by ambition, by pride, by a desire of plunder, and of conquest; and the wish to humble and enfeeble a powerful and rival neighbour. But, added to these motives, the people of Israel were incited by jealousy, and, above all, by religious dissension and competition. For, from the separation of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, it had been the uniform policy of him, and the kings his successors, to widen and perpetuate the religious breach between the two kingdoms, to prevent them from renewing their former union with their brethren the Jews, which, if they were permitted or disposed to attend the public worship at Jerusalem, on the great festivals, they might naturally return to;—for this purpose, besides continuing the worship of the Golden Calves, which

Jeroboam had set up in Dan, and in Bethel, in opposition to, and as a substitute for, the the worship at Jerusalem, and keeping a line of guards along their frontiers, to cut off all intercourse of religion between the two nations; many of the kings of Israel, in pursuance of the same system of moulding religion to state policy, instead of purifying the religious principles of their subjects, endeavoured rather to corrupt and alienate them wholly from the laws of God to infidelity and idolatry, in which impious attempts they were but too well seconded by the continued depravity of that people. Such was the nature of that *sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin*, so often repeated in the historical books of Scripture; from which we learn that few or none of his successors departed, and which may, in general, be defined to be, *the debasement of religion from political motives to political ends*, and the *promotion of schism, and religious*

animosity with the same unworthy views. Of this kind were the peculiar characteristical qualities of the kings of Israel, distinct from those of Syria, which, on the occasion just now mentioned, carried the Israelites to such excesses of ferocity against their brethren of Judah, that the Almighty thought fit himself to interfere, and reprove them by the mouth of one of his prophets, in terms of justly merited severity. This prophet, meeting the army of Israel on its return to Samaria, with its immense multitude of captives and booty, thus addressed them.—" Behold, because " the Lord God of your fathers was wroth " with Judah, he hath delivered them into " your hand, and *ye have slain them in a* " *rage that reacheth up into Heaven;* and " now ye purpose *to keep under the chil-* " *dren of Judah and Jerusalem for bond-* " *men and bondwomen* unto you; but are " there not WITH YOU, EVEN WITH YOU, " sins against the Lord your God?

Thus did the Almighty reprobate the excessive cruelty of those very persons whom he made use of as instruments to punish the depravity of their brethren. Yet we find that this brutal disposition of their enemies, detestable as it was to God, and ought to be to man, was rather the object of imitation to the very people of Judah, who were afflicted by it, than the gentle virtues of pure religion; and instead of abhorring, *they took delight in the* GENIUS, *and* CHARACTER *of* REMALIAH'S SON: *they rejoiced also in* REZIN; they were pleased with the principles and the manners of those who did not even carry the outward mask or pretension to religion, but were *open* and *professed idolaters* or *infidels*, both in principle and practice; who to extreme cruelty, exemplified abundantly under their king Hazael, added extreme debauchery, grossness, and effeminacy of manners, united with pride and ambition. For these qualities of *their adjoining rivals*

and enemies, did the Jews despise, and forsake, *the simple but solid qualities of the heart and mind*, recommended to them by their friend, their patron, their protector, and their God.

Justly then, indeed, did this depraved people merit the infliction of severe punishment from this God, to whom they thus preferred their bitterest enemies. But let us here observe, how singularly appropriate is their punishment to their crime. "*He brings up upon them the waters of* "*the river, strong and many*. If we take the figure of *waters* here, in the same sense as in the former passage, that is, as meaning *sentiments* and *principles* in reference to *moral qualities*, here is figured an inundation of the same irreligious, ambitious, cruel, and debauched principles and practices, which had been the objects of admiration to the Jews, in their immediate rivals and domestic opponents, carried to

a still greater height of perfection in the rich, the luxurious, and the powerful nation of the Assyrians, at once pouring upon their country, stretching forth its wings (or *overflow*) far and wide, beyond the channels and banks which used to confine that river, *reaching even to the neck*, and thus leaving barely a precarious and miserable existence to the inhabitants immersed in this inundation; robbed by the spread of these destructive waters of all that accumulation of wealth, of enjoyment, of comforts, of necessaries, which had formerly flowed from the blessing and protection of the Almighty, but had proved the means of alienating the corrupted heart from his simple laws. In such a case, I say, with what peculiar force of reason would not a people receive their punishment from the same source from whence their crime was derived, from the natural swell of an *impetuous flood, greater indeed in volume*, and con-

sequently more desolating in effect, but *exactly similar in nature* to those smaller, disturbed, and rapid torrents of *polluted water*, which they had preferred to *their own domestic and salutary stream of Shiloah?*

In another sense the figure of waters in a state of inundation is used, in prophetical language, to denote extension of the bounds of a nation by conquest: and thus, in the passage now under consideration, it excellently points to us the subjugation, but not total destruction of the Jewish nation, the flood not overwhelming them, but reaching to the neck, leaving a possibility of future recovery, even from this dreadful calamity, which we find was exactly verified in the fate of that nation, not only in the several successive attacks which they experienced from the Assyrians, during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, but also in the final captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, under Zedekiah, the

last of their kings. Of this interference of the Assyrians with the Jews, it deserves to be well remarked, that the foundation was laid by King Ahaz at the very period which we are now contemplating, by his calling in Tiglath Pileser to assist him againt the kings of Syria and Israel, who were both conquered, and their people carried into captivity by him, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah; but Ahaz himself was so far from being benefited by this assistance, that he was obliged to pay for it with all his treasures, and become tributary to his ally, whom he now got both as a master and a formidable neighbour, instead of his former rivals of Syria and Israel.

Let us now apply this remarkable and most important passage of the prophet Isaiah, which involves in it the efficient causes of the fate of a nation, which is generally considered by the Sacred Writers,

and their most judicious commentators, as a type or representation of the Christian church. Let us apply, I say, the spirit of this passage to the present state of that church in Europe; and, above all, let us apply the example to our own country, in whose fate we must, of course, be most immediately interested; and finally, to our own breasts. Let us ask whether the amiable, the unassuming, the humble precepts of the gospel of Christ are not held in private, or rather, whether in these days they have not been held in open and public contempt and derision? Have not ambition, pride, luxury, debauchery, worldliness, and self-sufficience, rising with prosperity, and extending with affluence through the upper ranks, spread the infection of these poisonous qualities to the lower, until, by degrees, *the leaven has penetrated the whole lump;* until nearly the mass of society in the Christian world is equally tainted with irreligion, as with

sensuality? The very name of Christian, in practice or in principle, if it is not yet become a term of open reproach, and a signal of persecution, as under Nero and Domitian, does it not, in many circles, excite a caustic smile of contempt, as if it implied either gross hypocrisy, or else inferiority of understanding, narrowness of heart, and defect both of spirit and knowledge of the world? And, the apprehension of this sneer, does it not deter the weak, the shallow, and the unstable, from allowing, or rather induce many of them, absolutely to disavow all respect for the modest, the simple stream of Shiloah? And if we trace this change of sentiment, this torrent of modern philosophy, to its ultimate sources, shall we not distinctly perceive that the true fountain from whence it springs, are the admiration, the adoption, and even the servile imitation, of what are called Pagan virtues; in fact, of all the qualities, moral and immoral, of the

ancient Pagan world? And that on this stock has been engrafted, of the peculiar growth of the Christian world, the hypocrisy, the gross profaneness and impiety, which have arisen from the abuse and depravation of Christianity, by worldly and political men, and the ferocious animosity of contending sects; of sects struggling, not for the restoration of true religion and pure morals, but, under the mask of their peculiar tenets, though, in fact, wholly regardless of religion, each sect grappling with another to establish the selfish views and base interests of its own party, in the downfal of its antagonists?

In this conflict of sects, have we not seen the strong description of the prophet exactly verified: "they snatch on the right hand, and are hungry; they eat "on the left hand, and are not satisfied; "they eat every man the flesh of his own "arm; *Manasseh Ephraim*, and *Ephraim*

" *Manasseh*; and THEY TOGETHER ARE " AGAINST JUDAH?

And with regard to our own country in particular, have not these infectious principles and practices taken deep root among us? And whence is it that we have drawn these polluted waters? Is it not a notorious fact, that we have derived them from that nation which has proved the common source of *seduction*, as now of *hostility*, to all Europe, but of *peculiarly determined and destructive animosity to us?* Yet at the very moment that this malignant power has lifted its exterminating arm against us, *do we not admire, do we not even imitate those same qualities of these deadly foes*, which created, and now stimulate the passions, that tend to our own destruction? Do we not then, as the the Jews of old, REJOICE IN REZIN and REMALIAH'S SON; and have we not learned from thence to REFUSE THE WATERS OF

SHILOAH, THAT GO SOFTLY? and if it cannot be denied that we are deeply involved in a similar crime with the Jews of old, can we wonder that a similar punishment should hang over our heads? Can we wonder if *the Lord should bring up upon us the waters of the river, strong and many?* Can we complain if we see this impetuous flood of principles, which we ourselves have preferred, and even yet prefer, to the lowly precepts of the gospel of Christ;—to see, in fact, *these our own adopted principles* brought into action, and the nation that we have *chosen for our model*, now swelling into an inundation of barbarity; and after exhibiting their genuine character in the desolation of the other nations of Europe, at this instant rising with all their force to burst the banks that have hitherto happily restrained their course, to involve us too in the common ruin, *and to fill the breadth of thy land*, O IMMANUEL?

Awful indeed, my friends, is this eventful period;—awful beyond all former periods in the annals of mankind. Let us profit by these warnings, and "attend to "the things of our peace, before they are "hid from our eyes;" and, above all, let us renounce *these polluted waters;* let us quit THE CISTERNS, THE BROKEN CISTERNS, *which we have hewn out for ourselves*, and *return to the fountain of living waters*, to the *pure stream and* POOL OF SHILOAH; let us there wash from our *dimmed eyes the clay of worldliness, the ordure of sensuality*, and, with these, *the film of unbelief*; and "*let* "*us watch and pray always, that we may* "*be accounted worthy* TO ESCAPE ALL THESE "THINGS THAT SHALL COME TO PASS, AND "TO STAND BEFORE THE SON OF MAN."

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